



Week 2 Assignment: Background – Real Life Research Action Examples

Overview

Last week students had an opportunity to examine the differences in action research and traditional research. Students began to answer questions like:

- Why do action research?
- How will action research benefit leaders and stakeholders in educational settings?
- Why is reflection an important skill for leaders?
- Why are blogs beneficial in sharing what we are learning about action research?

This week's lecture, interviews, readings and assignments focus on examples of action research in educational settings. These examples will help you begin to identify your topic for your action research project and provide you with a clear purpose describing why this action research project is important in your professional development.

Here are the Learning and Performance Outcomes for Week Two:

Learning Outcomes

- 1) Identify possible action research topics from the intern plan developed in EDLD 5311 and skills needed to successfully lead the research project.
- 2) Be familiar with areas frequently identified by school leaders needing further research (e.g., school and curriculum development, school culture/campus improvement, school performance in reducing achievement gaps, etc.).

Performance Outcomes:

- 1) Describe some examples of action research from reviewing interviews with current school leaders.
- 2) Review your internship plan and meet with the Site Supervisor to brainstorm potential needed and/or desired research topics.
- 3) Using *Leading with passion and knowledge: The principal as action researcher*, identify at least nine areas that are common targets or themes of school-based action research.

Rubric

Use the following Rubric to guide your work on the Week 2 Assignment.

Tasks	Accomplished The evidence suggests that this work is a "Habit of Mind." The educator is ready to mentor others in this area.	Proficient The evidence suggests that performance on this work matches that of a strong educator.	Needs Improvement The evidence does not yet make the case for the educator being proficient at this task.
Action Research – Lessons from Scholar Practitioners	Student selects two of the interviewed scholars and clearly answers questions thoroughly, and for each selected scholar, the student identifies at least one topic for action research; suggestions for conducting action research; and writes a meaningful reflection on lessons learned from the interviews. (3 Points)	Student selects two of the interviewed scholars and attempts to answer questions, but does not thoroughly address all three areas addressed in the activity. (2 Points)	Student only comments on one interviewed scholar and does not thoroughly respond to all areas addressed in the activity. (1 Point)
Common action research topics in educational settings	Student clearly identifies eight or nine of the text topics and provides an example of action research for each of those 8 or 9 areas, along with explaining the benefit(s) of conducting action research in each of the identified topics. Student basically receives a full point for each topic identified and providing thorough responses to each topic. (8 – 9 Points)	Student identifies six or seven of the text topics and provides an example of action research for each of those 6 or 7 areas, along with explaining the benefit(s) of conducting action research in each of the identified topics. Student basically receives a full point for each topic identified and providing responses to each topic. (6 – 7 Points)	Student identifies five or fewer of the text topics and provides an example of action research for each of those 8 or 9 areas, along with explaining the benefit(s) of conducting action research in each of the identified topics. Student basically receives a full point for each topic identified and providing thorough responses to each topic. (1 – 5 Points)
Selecting an Action Research Topic	Student follows directions and provides thorough responses to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify at least three topics for possible	Student responds to only two of the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify at least three topics for possible action	Student responds to one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify at least three topics for possible action research

	<p>action research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the conference with the Site Supervisor(s) regarding topics of interest for action research Describe the topic or problem agreed upon for the action research project. <p>(3 Points)</p>	<p>research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the conference with the Site Supervisor(s) regarding topics of interest for action research Describe the topic or problem agreed upon for the action research project. <p>(2 Points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the conference with the Site Supervisor(s) regarding topics of interest for action research Describe the topic or problem agreed upon for the action research project. <p>(1 Point)</p>
Assignment Mechanics	<p>Responses are relevant to course content; no errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Students demonstrate proper APA style.</p> <p>(3 Points)</p>	<p>Responses are relevant to course content; few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.</p> <p>(2 Points)</p>	<p>Responses do not reflect knowledge of course content, lack clarity and depth, and/or include multiple errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.</p> <p>(1 Point)</p>

Week Two Assignment, Part 1 – Action Research Lessons from Scholar Practitioners

Go to Week Two Lectures and watch the interviews with three school leaders who discuss action research projects and suggestions for conducting action research. The three school leaders completed their doctorates at Lamar University, and their dissertations are available in the Lamar library and in the resource section of this course. The three leaders are:

- Dr. Johnny Briseño, Principal, Rancho Isabella Elementary, Angleton ISD
- Dr. Timothy Chargois, Director of Research, Planning and Development in Beaumont ISD
- Dr. Kirk Lewis, Superintendent, Pasadena ISD

After watching and listening to these three scholar practitioners, select two of them and answer the following based on the comments from the two interviews you analyzed:

1. Identify the scholars you selected

For each scholar, answer the following:

2. Identify at least one area or topic for action research discussed by each scholar.
3. Describe at least one suggestion or purpose described by each scholar for conducting action research.
4. Reflect on what you learned from watching and listening to each of these scholars.

Remember if you wish to follow-up on the topics these scholars selected for their action research, please see their respective dissertations located in the Resource Section of this course, as well as available with other Educational Leadership dissertations at the Lamar University library site.

Also, in the Week One Lecture, we discussed an outstanding web resource on action research,

Electronic Textbook - A Blast from the Past: Your Literature Review

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~mid/edr720/class/literature/blast/reading2-1-1.html>.

Dr. Mary Dereshiwsy, who served as a consultant and action research scholar, to this course, shared her web site, and this particular link provides you with insightful information regarding conducting a literature review, also discussed in the Dana text, Data Collection Strategy 9: Literature, pp. 93 – 94. This website provides you with guidance in researching what has been written or published on a particular research topic of interest. The professors strongly suggest that you examine this website, also referenced in the Resource Section of the Course.

Workspace

Complete your work on Part 1 of this assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

The scholars I selected for analysis from the Week Two Video Interviews are Dr. Johnny Briseño, Principal, Rancho Isabella Elementary, Angleton ISD and Dr. Timothy Chargois, Director of Research, Planning and Development in Beaumont ISD.

The primary area or topic for action research that I identified from the interview with Dr. Briseño regards using qualitative data on students to improve instruction; that is, getting to know students' identities, learning styles, and especially what works instructionally for a particular student or group of students. Quantitative data, while essential, does not provide a complete picture on student achievement; qualitative data is essential to understand why some students or classes exhibit particular behaviors that either facilitate or interfere with learning.

The primary area or topic for action research that I identified from the interview with Dr. Chargois is to research the difference between effective and ineffective teachers; specifically, to determine how teachers show ethical responsibility for their students and student achievement, and the relationship of this ethical responsibility (or lack thereof) to their effectiveness as a teacher. Like Dr. Briseño's topic, this topic ultimately deals with qualitative data, with teachers getting to know more about their students, taking an interest in them, and adjusting instruction to compensate for their unique needs, life situations and learning styles.

A suggestion or purpose described by Dr. Briseño for conducting action research is that research can make our lives as teachers and administrators easier. We all have questions, wonderings, or situations when we are looking for ideas and solutions to learning difficulties; why should we reinvent the wheel, or try potentially inappropriate or unproven ideas, when we can build upon the successes of others? Research is easy to perform today by using search engines, online periodicals and Web 2.0 tools, and often leads to the discovery of proven methods for addressing our wonderings. Whether the answer comes from professional research or the blog of our peer teacher across the district, the ease of online research helps us minimize research time and maximize our efforts to improve instruction, ultimately increasing the use of inquiry as a tool for change.

A suggestion or purpose described by Dr. Chargois for conducting action research includes the ability to use data, especially qualitative data, to lead a systemic transformation of the learning environment by helping teachers become more effective. Engaging teachers in the action research process helps teachers focus on using data to transform instruction, fostering a research-oriented learning community that uses both qualitative and quantitative data to understand their learners' needs. By developing a better understanding of the effect of teacher ethics and personal responsibility on student achievement, teachers can take charge and begin to make predictions regarding performance, leading to positive change and immediately impacting instruction.

By watching and listening to these two scholars, I learned the value of performing qualitative research to become better acquainted with my students and with all the aspects of their lives as individuals that affect their performance in the learning environment. I was impressed that both of the scholars I chose to analyze for this assignment kept emphasizing qualitative research on students during their interviews. My natural tendency as a technologist, with experience in statistics and analysis, is to primarily rely on quantitative data, which tells the story of what is known or what was accomplished using quantifiable metrics to determine performance and achievement. However, both of these gentlemen kept referencing the importance of qualitative

data on their students, that is, knowing the student and their unique circumstances, situations and learning styles as related to performance in the learning environment.

I found this concept to be particularly insightful as it is my natural tendency to deal with students (and teachers) in a more clinical manner; I often tend to overlook the personal side of the equation. These gentlemen kept referencing how many hours of sleep a particular student had, what their learning style was, their disposition and temperament and its impact on learning, and their background, all areas that require personal involvement, developing relationships with and listening to the learners, sources of vital information that you cannot obtain from analysis of reports and assessments alone.

My Assistant Superintendent in La Vernia ISD, Dr. Diane Fisher, often refers to the importance of rigor, relevance and *relationships*; I now have a clearer understanding of what she has been referring to regarding the relationships. My lesson from this assignment is that the relationships we form with our students (knowing the student), and the qualitative data we obtain through these relationships, are of great importance in the context of school improvement; the qualitative data defines a contextual framework essential to interpreting and understanding the quantitative data regarding any particular learner.

Week Two Assignment, Part 2 – Common Action Research Topics in School Settings

Read chapter two, The Passions That Drive Your Journey, from the Dana text, pp. 29 – 68, and focus on the following nine areas that the author describes as major wonderings of many school leaders:

1. Staff development
2. Curriculum development
3. Individual teacher(s)
4. Individual student(s)
5. School culture/community
6. Leadership
7. Management
8. School performance
9. Social justice or equity issues

For each of the identified areas, do the following:

- Provide at least one example of action research in each of the nine areas
- Describe why this might be an important area for action research in schools

Workspace

Complete your work on Part 2 of this assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

According to our Dana (2009) text *Leading with Passion and Knowledge: The Principal as Action Researcher*, there are nine common action research passions, or topic areas, in educational settings. The following examples of action research, and their associated potential benefits, are based upon information contained in this text, and include:

1. *Staff Development* – An example of action research in this area is performing research to determine how peer coaching or peer mentoring might be utilized to help veteran teachers continue to learn and grow in skill and ability as professionals, and how the school's principal can implement and assist with this process. A benefit of conducting action research on this topic would be the potential elimination of the "comfortable" teacher, the veteran teacher who has taught long enough that they are on autopilot with their assignments and lessons ready to go, basically being replayed year after year in the mistaken belief that what succeeded for one group of students will accommodate all students. In this day of rapid change and accountability, this approach is not effective, and often leads to a significant percentage of students who fail to meet expectations. Today's students need differentiation and the availability of content and teaching methods suited to their digital native learning styles, so teachers must continue to grow, increasing in both knowledge and instructional ability, in order to maximize student achievement. Using peer coaching or peer mentoring would facilitate spreading new instructional methodologies and best practices that the "younger" teachers are schooled in and implement so well to the veteran teachers, forming professional learning communities focused on modernizing and thereby improving instructional practices.
2. *Curriculum Development* – Action research in this area is exemplified by the topic question "How can a campus principal utilize learning communities as a tool for both teachers and campus leaders to increase their knowledge of exemplary curriculum practices in the subject of writing?" A benefit of conducting action research on this topic results as educators take ownership of an issue, and learning communities are documented as increasing teacher ownership of critical issues; they are more likely to implement research-based best practices and to include those practices in their curriculum design work. Assuming the learning communities cross grade-level boundaries, this approach would increase both the breadth and the vertical alignment within the continuum of the writing curriculum, and consequently lead to increased mastery on the state writing assessment.
3. *Individual Teacher(s)* – A topic centered on researching what types of support are best at helping teachers to succeed is a good example of potential action research in this area. A benefit of conducting action research on this topic is that it is broad enough to include both new and veteran teachers; while new teachers need specialized, targeted assistance to increase their confidence and get them off to a good start, *all* teachers need ongoing support to remain successful and keep abreast of ever-increasing teacher expectations and state performance standards. A more generalized topic wondering such as this pays dividends by impacting learning holistically, instead of concentrating on a specific subset (only new teacher needs for support, for instance) that overlooks the needs of all teachers to continually learn and improve. This topic would likely benefit all teachers on the campus by leading to the establishment of professional learning communities.
4. *Individual Student(s)* – An example of action research in this area includes applying research by performing a follow-up study to determine what happens to students who

struggled academically in reading and were placed in a reading intervention program on campus after they have exited the intervention program. Conducting action research on this topic would benefit the campus reading intervention program and all participating students by determining program efficacy and the level of sustained improvement while ensuring best practices are being applied to the practices and operation of the program. Students who had exited the program would also benefit as the research would identify those students who were not successful in sustaining their reading competency, enabling follow-up action and potential further remediation to increase their odds of ultimate academic success.

5. *School Culture/Community* – An example of action research in this area is typified by efforts to determine the role of weekly school-wide meetings in contributing to the formation of a caring school culture. The action research on this topic would enable adjusting the content, topics, and perhaps even the scheduling and location of these meetings, based on best practices, so that the meetings foster a culture of caring, positively benefitting both school culture and climate. The research would also likely result in a school culture that more accurately reflects the culture of the local community.
6. *Leadership* – An example of action research in this area would be the investigations of principals as they seek to learn by comparing and contrasting their own perceptions of themselves as instructional leaders against the perceptions of their teachers, their leadership team, and their supervisor. A benefit of conducting action research such as this is that it is built upon reflection, a critical leadership quality; as Harris, Edmonson and Combs remind us, “*Reflection allows one to see what is unknown so that one can begin to understand, which ultimately informs change.*” This action research topic synergistically enhances the principal’s self-reflection by filtering it through the lens of how others, from staff to supervisors, perceive the principal as an instructional leader, leading to strategic refinements of leadership skills benefitting the entire school.
7. *Management* – An example of action research in this area is highlighted by a principal seeking to improve upon frustrating and ineffective lunchtime policies and procedures by asking how students and the entire staff, from teachers to custodians, can work together to make lunchtime a more cooperative and pleasant experience for everyone. Benefits of conducting action research on this topic include fostering positive improvements in the behavior of students, thereby improving discipline. Additionally, a positive lunchroom environment sets the stage for a positive beginning to the afternoon’s learning activities, a critical step towards improving student achievement. Resulting betterment of the morale and climate of the campus would benefit all areas of learning.
8. *School Performance* – Researching how implementation of the continuous improvement model might help to increase overall student achievement in a school is one example of action research in the area of School Performance. A benefit of conducting action research on this topic results from examining and altering the way instruction is performed on a campus; if teachers and administrators do what they have always done, they will always get the same results, so change must be undertaken in order to improve. However, it must be the *right* change, and implementing a research-based, proven program such as the continuous improvement model guides all stakeholders within a school as they examine and modify their role in improving student achievement. This process of guided reflection and analysis, coupled with making the right changes in instructional methodologies and procedures based on research, ultimately leads to increased achievement.
9. *Social Justice or Equity Issues* – An example of action research in this area is exemplified by inquiry focused on moving a staff from an understanding of the qualitative data regarding their students, that is, who these students are and how their lives and backgrounds affect their learning, towards taking action to improve instruction for these students and to help

them succeed in life. Crucial benefits of conducting action research on this topic of equity stem from moving teachers from the stage of just awareness regarding why their students have learning difficulties or challenges to an action stance, intervening on behalf of these students and doing whatever it takes to reach and teach these students. No Child Left Behind places major emphasis on achieving equity for all students, regardless of background or socio-economic status, so social justice and equity research is not only a best practice, it is mandated by law. It is incumbent upon all teachers to ensure each student reaches their potential, and conducting action research on methods to improve learning and remove barriers for these students not only positively impacts student lives but assists in the attainment of AYP.

References:

Dana, Nancy F. (2009). *Leading with Passion and Knowledge: The Principal as Action Researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA:Corwin. p. 29-68.

Harris, Sandra; Edmonson, Stacy; & Combs, Julie (2010). *Examining What We Do to Improve Our Schools: 8 Steps from Analysis to Action*. Larchmont, NY:Eye on Education. p. 49.

Week Two Assignment, Part 3 – Selecting Action Research Topics

Review your intern plan and identify at least three topics that might appeal to you and your Site Supervisor(s) as possible action research projects. Indicate if you have reviewed these topics with your Site Supervisor(s). Students may have reviewed the potential action research projects in the initial conference reviewing the intern plan with the Site Supervisor(s) in EDLD 5311. If you have not discussed your top three topics with your Site Supervisor(s), schedule an interview and discuss the possibilities of doing your action research project on a mutually agreed upon topic. **If you cannot meet face to face with your Site Supervisor at this time, select 3 topics or questions you are considering for your action research project and email or communicate those to your Site Supervisor and ask for some feedback. Remember in Week 4 of this course, we ask that you meet with your Site Supervisor(s) and try to reach consensus on an action research topic(s) or question(s). So instead of having two interviews, you can do the Week Two brainstorming via email or other communication that is effective for you and your Site Supervisor and then complete the decision-making process on the action research project in Week Four.**

If you have selected a topic of interest not in your intern plan, be sure to add it to your revised intern plan, and visit with your Site Supervisor(s) to make sure this is a topic that can be researched and supported.

In completing this assignment, do the following:

- Identify at least three topics for possible action research
- Describe the conference with the Site Supervisor(s) regarding topics of interest for action research
- Describe the topic or problem agreed upon for the action research project

Workspace

Complete your work on Part 3 of this assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

I have identified three topics for possible action research, which includes possibilities under three different areas of passion as identified in the Dana (2009) text *Leading with Passion and Knowledge: The Principal as Action Researcher*. My first possible topic falls under the area or passion of Staff Development; I have wondered whether providing technology staff development primarily through a peer mentoring/peer coaching model would help our veteran teachers integrate technology more naturally and transparently as do many of our younger teachers. My action research question would be how I, as Technology Director, could help our principals form professional learning communities founded on a peer coaching model in order to increase technology integration and implementation within each campus and across the District.

A second possible action research topic falls under the area of Curriculum Development; my guiding question is how I, as Technology Director, can assist our principals as curriculum leaders to improve the quality and relevance their campus' curriculum content. This topic would involve utilizing action research to explore online curriculum management tools and resources, potentially helping increase the availability of the curriculum by utilizing online Web 2.0 tools and a web-based Curriculum Management System (CMS). Relevance of content would also be improved by using action research to determine sources of ethical, relevant, web-based curriculum content chosen to engage and motivate our digital native students.

My third possible action research topic falls under the area of Individual Student(s) and deals with my wondering on how I, as Technology Director, can make instructional technology more accessible to our special needs students, particularly those in our Special Education classrooms. I have seen firsthand the positive effect of technology on these students, and experienced the engaging and calming effect of computers and the Internet on these children. I feel strongly that applying action research to this topic could increase differentiation and lead to opportunities for earlier intervention for the special needs students, improving both student achievement and the overall classroom behavioral environment.

During my discussion of these possible topics with my Site Supervisor, Dr. Tom Harvey, Superintendent of Schools for La Vernia ISD, it became evident that I was most passionate about the third possible topic; how I, as Technology Director can make instructional technology more accessible to our special needs students, particularly those in our Special Education classrooms. Although we both agreed all three topics were appropriate and each in its own way would benefit our District, it was decided to target this action research project as it represents a need that is not currently being addressed by other initiatives, allowing us to better gauge the impact of this project.

There is an initiative in place working towards establishment of online curriculum utilizing a web-based CMS and while increasing the relevance and rigor of content, so potential topic choice two is already being addressed, making it difficult to determine whether the existing project or my action research project would independently yield benefit. As to my first proposed topic, how I, as Technology Director, could help my principals form professional learning communities founded on a peer coaching model in order to increase technology integration and implementation within each campus and across the District, Dr. Harvey explained that this is already taking place on several campuses to a greater extent than I had realized. In fact, the plans for the coming school year's inservice training actually implements a peer coaching model to assist teachers in using various facets of technology including our new online grade reporting system and our online curriculum management system. Again, if this action research project

were implemented, it would be difficult to determine whether the existing project or my action research project yielded the most benefit.

The topic/problem we agreed upon for my action research project will focus on potential topic three, how I, as Technology Director, can make instructional technology more accessible to our special needs students, particularly those in our Special Education classrooms. More specifically, my action research project will focus on finding ways that I, as Technology Director, can best facilitate the implementation of technology for LVISD special needs (Special Education) students in order to increase technology accessibility, usability, time on task, differentiation, and early intervention. The action research will include seeking ways to improve/modify teacher technology professional development, examining best practices for implementing innovative technologies and Web 2.0 tools for special needs students while synergistically making use of our own unique data and experience on how thin client computing and virtual desktop technologies have increased the accessibility and usability of technology for other students. As I pointed out to Dr. Harvey, action research is vital to my exploring this issue with an open mind, as I, like any other technologist, already have “pet technologies” and many preconceived notions. Edyburn (2010) states that “*Finding the appropriate assistive technology can produce a blinding devotion to a specific technology product. However, the key component of the definition of assistive technology is that it enhances performance.*”

Under the guidance of my Site Supervisor, the significance of my proposed action research study will be to help our Special Education teachers more effectively implement technology so as to engage, motivate, reach and improve achievement for our special needs students at all grade levels. Improving the accessibility and usability of technology should minimize frustration for our students, thereby improving the general climate in the classroom while reducing disruptions caused by recalcitrant technology. The resulting pilot project should increase student access to technology, increase teacher implementation of technology, and increase the integration of technology within the school, which in addition to improving student achievement should also increase our scores on the Texas Campus STaR Chart and positively impact attainment of AYP. Once the implementation methods and technologies have been perfected with the help of our Special Education teachers, a second phase of this project will target all teachers to benefit special needs students being served in regular classrooms using the inclusion model.

References:

Dana, Nancy F. (2009). *Leading with Passion and Knowledge: The Principal as Action Researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA:Corwin. p. 29-68.

Edyburn, Dave (2010). *SETP Special Education Technology Practice: Assistive Technology Advocacy*. Retrieved July 22, 2010 from <http://www.setp.net/articles/article0903-7.html>

Blog Reflection – Please remember to post at least one reflection or comment regarding lessons learned from Week Two on your blog.

Screenshot of the EDLD 5301 Research Week 2 blog posting on my blog,
<http://educatingforourfuture.blogspot.com/>:

EDUCATING FOR OUR FUTURE

SATURDAY, JULY 24, 2010

Reflections on EDLD 5301 Research, Week Two


During Week Two of my Lamar Research course, I was impressed that both of the scholar interviews I chose to analyze for my assignment, Dr. Johnny Briseño, Principal, Rancho Isabella Elementary, Angleton ISD and Dr. Timothy Chargois, Director of Research, Planning and Development in Beaumont ISD, kept emphasizing qualitative research on students during their interviews. My natural tendency as a technologist, with experience in statistics and analysis, is to primarily rely on quantitative data, which tells the story of what is known or what was done using quantifiable metrics to determine performance and achievement. However, both of these gentlemen kept referencing the qualitative data on their students, that is, knowing the student and their unique circumstances, situations and learning styles as related to their impact on performance in the learning environment.

I found this insightful, and a lesson I need to take to heart, as it is my natural tendency to deal with students and teachers in a more clinical manner and I often overlook the personal side of the equation. These gentlemen kept referencing how many hours of sleep a particular student had, what their learning style was, their disposition and temperament and its impact on learning, and their background, all areas that require personal involvement, developing relationships with and listening to the learners, great sources of vital information that you simply cannot obtain from analysis of reports and assessments.




My Assistant Superintendent here in La Vernia ISD, Dr. Diane Fisher, always references the importance of rigor, relevance and relationships; I now have a clearer understanding of what she was referring to regarding the relationships. My lasting lesson from Week Two is that the *relationships*, and the *qualitative data* we obtain through these relationships, are as important in the context of school improvement and increasing student achievement as any quantitative information could ever be. The qualitative data defines a contextual framework essential to interpreting and understanding the quantitative data regarding any particular learner.

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ABOUT ME



EDTECHMAN
LA VERNIA, TX
49-year-old lifelong educator who loves technology and the way it can empower and transform people's lives.

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